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ABSTRACT

This monograph describes the development, implementation, and outcomes of the full-day, literacy-focused Bright Beginnings program for disadvantaged preschoolers in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) in North Carolina. Key components of Bright Beginnings are a child-centered curriculum with strong language development and literacy emphasis, parent/family involvement and partnerships, community support and collaboration, professional development, and ongoing research and evaluation. The monograph describes several aspects of the program--development, curriculum design, classroom instruction, student composition, learning assessment, staff certification and training, parent participation, program funding, community partnerships, and volunteer support--and documents program effects on the learning of successive cohorts from 1998 through 2001. Results of the individually-administered Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP) were compared for three groups in each cohort: Bright Beginnings prekindergarten participants, a comparison group of educationally needy children, and all other students. Among the major findings from the program's first 5 years is that Bright Beginnings participants were much better prepared each year than the Comparison Group and slightly better prepared than the All Other Students group. Longitudinal studies of Cohort 1 students revealed that by the end of Grade 2, Bright Beginnings participants consistently performed better on literacy and mathematics assessments than Comparison Group students, and had lower grade retention rates. When the number of Cohort 1 students who had been retained in grades K-2 were factored into the assessment data as being below third-grade level, findings revealed that, by the end of Grade 3, percentages of Bright Beginnings participants scoring at or above grade level were considerably higher than percentages for the Comparison Group in reading and mathematics. General patterns of relative performance for Bright

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Beginnings participants and their peers in successive cohorts were substantially similar to that in Cohort 1. (Contains 18 references.) (KB)

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